Chapter **16**

Ten Essential Tools for Digital Marketing Success

Using the right tool at the right time for the right job can make or break your digital marketing efforts. And there are no shortages of software and applications to choose from. The glut of tools at your disposal is both a blessing and a curse, however, because the choice can be overwhelming.

At DigitalMarketer, we test a lot of tools. We figure out what works and use them to grow our businesses. In this chapter, we walk you through the ten types of tools you need to run your digital marketing campaigns and, specifically, which tools work for each job.

Building a Website

In the early days of the Internet, you had to custom-code websites from scratch. Today, even the most nontechnical person can create a website with very little understanding of code using a content management system. A *content management system (CMS)* is a platform that you use to create and manage your website.

The most important choice you make when building your website is what CMS to use.

The best CMSs are

>> **Intuitive:** Above all else, the CMS should be easy to use even for the nontechnical person.

>> **Search-engine friendly:** The CMS should structure the website in a way that is easy for search engines to access.

>> **Mobile friendly:** Your customers and prospects are increasingly accessing the web from mobile devices; your CMS should display your website in a mobile-friendly design.

>> **Modular:** Your CMS should be capable of adding functionality, such as an event calendar or social sharing buttons.

>> **Multiuser:** Look for a CMS that allows you to add users and control the level of permissions they have to make changes to your website.

>> **Secure:** Although there are no security guarantees, your CMS should be as resistant to website hacks and malware as possible.

Following are some CRMs that we recommend.

WordPress.org

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https://wordpress.org/
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This free, open source platform began as a blogging platform and has evolved into a full-blown CMS. It is extremely modular and search-engine friendly, and it allows for multiple users with various levels of permissions. It's important not to confuse WordPress.org with WordPress.com. WordPress.org is a free CMS originally designed for blogging, but now it's used by all sorts of websites and online stores. WordPress.com is a blog hosting platform. Also, WordPress.org is a self-hosted platform, whereas WordPress.com is hosted on WordPress' servers. As a business owner, you want to use the self-hosted WordPress.org CMS so that you have complete ownership of your website. If you're looking for a low budget, flexible CMS, WordPress.org is a great choice.

Joomla

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https://www.joomla.org/
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Joomla is another popular CMS platform that comes with lots of different templates and extensions. It was first released in 2005, so, like WordPress, it's been going for years. Although it's free to use, you'll need hosting and a domain name. It's an ideal CMS platform for developers and experienced website creators, so it's not the best option for beginners.

Drupal

`https://www.drupal.org/`

Drupal is the CMS behind some major websites, including *The Economist*'s site and a number of university's sites. Drupal is a good option for developers or for people able to hire a developer. It's especially good if you're aiming to build a highly customized site that needs to handle a lot of data. You can host a Drupal site on Site-Ground (`https://www.siteground.com/drupal-hosting.htm`). They offer free installation and can even help you transfer an existing Drupal site.

BigCommerce

`https://www.bigcommerce.com/`

BigCommerce is a fully hosted ecommerce platform, which is sometimes called an all-in-one platform. And thanks to this, it's easy to get started with if you're a beginner. BigCommerce hosts your site for you, as well as handling security and backups for you, along with providing the actual CMS platform itself.

Shopify

`https://www.shopify.com/`

Whether you're selling physical products completely online or you're a brick-and-mortar retailer looking to sell your wares online, Shopify is worth your consideration. Shopify handles the design and layout of your store, but it also manages payments, shipping, inventory, and more.

Hosting a Website

A *web host* is a business that stores your website files and makes your website accessible on the Internet. Although you can set up a web server to deliver your website yourself, most companies want to use a web hosting company.

The best web hosts have the following characteristics:

>> **Significant uptime:** If your website goes offline, it costs you money. Your web host should have 99 percent uptime or greater.

>> **Support:** Look for a host that provides 24/7 customer support, both over the phone and with live chat.

>> **Speed:** Your customers and prospects expect your website to load quickly, and people will bounce if it takes too long. Your website host is a major factor in your page load speed.

>> **Security:** The last thing you want to deal with as a business owner or marketer is a hacked website. Your host should take the security of your website as seriously as you do.

>> **Redundancy:** Look for a host that backs up your website daily so that you don't have to worry about losing everything you've worked so hard to build.

We recommend the following website hosts.

WP Engine

`https://wpengine.com/`

If you choose to use WordPress as your CMS, WP Engine is a great choice as your web host. As a managed WordPress host, WP Engine only provides service to WordPress users, which means its entire infrastructure can be optimized for WordPress. This company is known for exceptional uptime, lightning-fast page load speeds, and unprecedented security.

HostGator

`https://www.hostgator.com/`

HostGator is an excellent web hosting service that's simple to use and offers an array of useful plans for consumers and small businesses. Unlike some hosts, HostGator does include support in all its plans. So if you want a hosting plan that's inexpensive and includes support, HostGator may be for you. Bear in mind that HostGator currently doesn't offer any sort of email support — just phone and live chat. Be prepared to get on the phone whenever you have a question.

A2 Hosting

`https://www.a2hosting.com/`

Packed with features, A2 Hosting has a reputation for having some of the fastest web hosting around. At each of their different hosting tiers, A2 Hosting beats other hosts on speed. So if you're looking for pure speed, consider A2. Like many of the other web hosts, they offer one-click installs for popular CMS tools like WordPress and Drupal.

Rackspace

`https://www.rackspace.com/`

No matter what you're looking to deliver on the web, chances are Rackspace can handle it. Rackspace is a company with an excellent reputation in the industry and a long track record of quality.

Choosing Email Marketing Software

As we explain in this book (see Chapter 11), email marketing is critical to the success of most digital marketing campaigns. Hundreds of email marketing tools are available to choose from, but a few stand out in the crowd.

The best email applications have the following characteristics:

» **Deliverability:** If your email never reaches prospects' Inbox, nothing else matters. Look for an email service provider with a sterling reputation so that your email avoids the Spam folder.

» **Automation:** If you want your email marketing to be working even when you're sleeping or on vacation, look for an email service provider with the capability to build automated email campaigns that are triggered by a customer or prospect's behavior.

» **Reporting:** You want to monitor the open and click rates on your emails, among other things. Look for an email service provider with a full reporting suite.

» **Mobile friendliness:** More and more of your email is being consumed from the small screen. Your email service provider should be able to deliver readable email to phones and devices.

Here are some email service providers that we recommend.

Constant Contact

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https://www.constantcontact.com/
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Constant Contact should be on any small to mid-sized business marketer's short list. It does a good job delivering solid email marketing capabilities in an intuitive and nicely priced interface. And, the company is working to expand its capabilities, especially across other marketing channels and even media buying.

AWeber

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https://www.aweber.com/
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Despite its low cost, AWeber has a sterling reputation for deliverability, and the software integrates seamlessly with other popular tools like WordPress. If your budget is tight, AWeber is an outstanding choice.

Mailchimp

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https://mailchimp.com/
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Even if you haven't used email marketing software before, you've more than likely heard of Mailchimp. Mailchimp is a veteran and leader in the email marketing category. It's also expanded its services and now offers CRM (customer relationship management) features and a website builder to help small to mid-size businesses carry out marketing campaigns. So if you're looking for an email marketing software that has the capabilities of going beyond that, Mailchimp is one to consider.

Considering Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Software

As your business grows, you will likely need to add customer relationship management (CRM) software. In some cases, your CRM will replace your email software, but a CRM is much more than an email service provider. It can, in fact, be difficult to pin down the exact role of a CRM because that role varies widely from solution to solution. That said, all CRMs are designed to manage the relationships

with your customers and prospects, as well as the data associated with that relationship.

The best CRMs have the following characteristics:

>> **Centralized data:** Do your homework on the CRMs you're considering and make sure that the software collects the data you need for your specific situation, and in a central location.

>> **Support and training:** The more features that come with your CRM, the more training and support you'll need. Choose a company that is known for its support and training.

>> **Reporting:** You gain power from collecting data about your customers and prospects only if you to make good decisions based on that data. Your CRM should have a robust and intuitive reporting suite.

Our recommended CRMs follow.

Keap

https://keap.com/

Formerly called Infusionsoft, this CRM gives you the capability to manage products, record customers' and prospects' data, process payments, send emails, and more all from one system.

Salesforce

https://www.salesforce.com/

Salesforce has long been the CRM solution to beat. This pioneering platform is a cloud-based CRM that offers solutions for every business, from small to enterprise level. Salesforce is known for its robust integration with thousands of applications, from QuickBooks to Evernote.

HubSpot

https://www.hubspot.com/

HubSpot is aimed at small businesses and is an innovative CRM that has a freemium model as well as a range of add-ons. With these, it can evolve into an end-to-end solution for small businesses.

Zoho CRM

`https://www.zoho.com/`

Zoho CRM does a great job of delivering a mix of features at a competitive price. It's easy to implement and offers users lots of functionality and integration with a long list of compatible Zoho products.

Adding a Payment Solution

The payment processor is arguably your most important tool because, well, it's how you process payments. The payment processor handles transactions from various channels, with the most critical ones being credit and debit cards.

The best payment processors are

>> **Secure:** Anyone involved with processing credit card information must comply with the security standards of the credit card industry. Make sure your payment processor takes payment card industry (PCI) compliance seriously.

>> **Intuitive:** Look for a payment processor that allows you to do things like set up order forms or integrate with your invoicing software.

>> **Capable of recurrent billing:** If you need to be able to accept recurring payments from your customers, make sure that your payment process can handle that type of billing.

We encourage you to try the following payment processors.

Stripe

`https://stripe.com/`

Designed for larger firms, Stripe offers dependable, easy-to-configure payment processing, handles recurrent billing, and integrates with applications such as WordPress, Shopify, and FreshBooks. The main difference between this service and many others is that it isn't an out-of-the-box solution. Instead, you're provided with a range of flexible tools to customize your own payment processes.

Square

https://squareup.com/

If you want customers to be able to swipe credit or debit cards in your store or on the go, consider Square. The Square app turns your smartphone or tablet into a credit card processing machine.

PayPal

https://www.paypal.com/

PayPal is a household name with a userbase in the hundreds of millions, so it makes sense for merchants to accept PayPal as one of their online payment options. It provides payment processing services for ecommerce vendors, auction sites, and other commercial entities globally, and allows you to accept credit cards including Amex and Visa. It also offers easy cart integration, plentiful customization options, online invoicing, and facilitates credit card payments over the phone.

Adyen

https://www.adyen.com/

Not only does Adyen accept all digital payment types and over 30 different global currencies, it is used by big companies like Uber, Spotify, Microsoft. and eBay to handle business and customer transactions. The software lets you accept every payment made to your company from a single platform, and gives you tools to manage risk and track results.

Using Landing Page Software

Landing page software tools contain templates to build effective landing pages, and some even come with split testing capabilities built right in. Turn to Chapter 7 for more on landing pages, and find out more about optimizing and split testing in Chapter 13.

The best landing-page software is

>> **Intuitive:** It sets up pages quickly.

>> **Responsive to mobile:** Your landing page must be mobile friendly or you risk losing opt-ins from mobile devices.

> » **Integrative:** Landing pages are designed to gather leads and offer products and services for sale. Look for a landing page software that automatically transfers new leads to your email software and works seamlessly with your payment processor.

Consider the following landing page builders.

Instapage

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https://instapage.com/
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Instapage is super easy to use — and as the name suggests — you can launch a landing page almost *instantly*. It's useful for businesses at all stages from solopreneurs to agencies to enterprise. Instapage makes creating beautiful landing pages as simple as "drag and drop," all without touching a single line of code.

Leadpages

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https://www.leadpages.net/product
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Leadpages has a lot of similarities to Instapage, but a big difference is they focus on agencies (as opposed to enterprise customers). In terms of price, Leadpages is one of the cheapest solutions on the market. So if you're looking to get a page up for quickly and cheaply, this could be a good option for your business. But if you want the functionality that most growth marketers demand (A/B testing, integrations, etc.), be forewarned, you'll have to pay extra for it with Leadpages.

Unbounce

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https://unbounce.com/
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Unbounce was the first landing page software. You could actually say they invented the category. And it remains one of the best landing page software tools out there. Unbounce is the solution for marketers that are laser-focused on conversion. This software is all about making sure you "un-bounce" — by guaranteeing that you can quickly and effortlessly deploy landing pages that convert.

HubSpot

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https://www.hubspot.com/
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We include HubSpot in our CRM recommendations above. But it offers a variety of tools for digital marketers and salespeople that go beyond a CRM. And its landing page software has gained a solid reputation in the space for its features, price, and ease of use. One unique advantage of HubSpot's landing page builder is that you're able to tie it into their CRM. If you're already using HubSpot or you're considering their service as a CRM or email marketing solution, their landing page builder could be the icing on the cake.

Sourcing and Editing Images

The web seems to become more visual with each passing day. With the rise of social platforms like Pinterest and Instagram, even text-based platforms like Twitter are embracing the power of the image. As a digital marketer, you'll likely find yourself needing to create images for everything from a Facebook ad to an email promotion. The gold standard of image-creation applications is Adobe Photoshop, and if you have the skill and inclination, you should absolutely use Photoshop. That said, you can choose from among a number of low-cost and easy-to-use applications for producing beautiful images that meet most marketer's needs.

The best image-creation applications are

>> **Cloud based:** Look for an image-editing software that you can easily access online.

>> **Intuitive:** For lightweight image editing, you want an application with a simple and easy-to-use interface.

>> **Low cost:** Images are critical to your digital marketing campaigns, but the tools you use to create them don't have to bust your budget.

Following are image-editing tools that we recommend.

Canva

`https://www.canva.com/`

Canva is a cloud-based drag-and-drop design application that comes with millions of images, layouts, icons, shapes, and fonts to choose from. It's a go-to and recommended by many in the social media space.

SnagIt

`https://www.techsmith.com/screen-capture.html`

Capture any type of image on your computer screen and use SnagIt's dynamic editor to crop, resize, add callouts and text, and much more.

TIP Many computers now come with basic image-editing software, so if you're on a budget or unsure where to start, your computer may be a good place to check first.

Managing Social Media

Thousands of applications allow you to monitor and publish to the social web. Prices vary based on the size of your organization and the features you need, but plenty of low-cost options for managing your social media presence without the big price tag are available.

The best social media applications are

- » **Cloud-based:** Look for a social media marketing application that lets you manage your social media from any device, including your mobile phone.

- » **Multiuser:** Most social media marketing campaigns require participation from more than one person in the business. Look for applications that allow you to easily add team members to your account.

- » **Reporting:** Social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook have their own reporting and analytics, but the right social media application adds more insight into what's working and what's not.

We recommend the following social media tools.

Hootsuite

`https://hootsuite.com/`

Hootsuite is a social media management platform that provides a dashboard for social media management. With paid and free plans, it integrates with most major social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and YouTube. The dashboard allows you to set up "streams" of notifications such as mentions of specific Twitter handles and Facebook accounts.

Meet Edgar

https://meetedgar.com/

Using Meet Edgar you can publish and schedule social posts to platforms like Facebook and Twitter automatically. Edgar allows you to make categories and choose what time content publishes using those categories. Then the library randomizes itself and posts content in rotation so that you're not bombarding your audience with the same social posts day after day.

Mention

https://mention.com/

With this tool you can pull mentions directly from all aspects of the social web, including social media channels, blogs, and new sites. Use Mention to find conversations about your brands, people, competitors, and more with this reasonably priced social-listening and reputation-management application.

Measuring Your Performance: Data and Analytics

Plenty of vendors claim to have the application that can end all your data and analytics problems. Luckily, most of the best tools have free solutions made available by Google. These tools are easy to use and provide the level of functionality that meets the needs of most businesses. (For more on analyzing your data, turn to Chapter 12.)

The best data tools are

» **Easy to use:** The right report at the right time can make all the difference to your business. Look for analytics and data solutions that allow you to find what you need in an intuitive interface.

» **Free:** Larger enterprises likely need to shell out big dollars for an analytics solution, but most businesses can get by with low- or no-cost solutions like Google Analytics.

» **Robust:** Choose an analytics application that contains a wide range of available data. Although you may not use it all today, the data is being captured and will be available if you need it.

Try the following data analytics applications.

Google Analytics

`https://marketingplatform.google.com/about/analytics/`

As described in Chapter 12, Google Analytics tracks and reports website traffic. We've tried the more expensive analytics solutions, and we keep coming back to good old Google Analytics.

Google Data Studio

`datastudio.google.com/`

Use this application to create stunningly beautiful and informative, interactive reports and graphs that you can share with others. Pull data from sources like Google Analytics, Google Ads, and Google Docs.

Google Tag Manager

`https://marketingplatform.google.com/about/tag-manager/`

Update website tags and add scripts to your website even if you aren't a code monkey. Google Tag Manager has a bit of a learning curve, but after you get the hang of it, you'll wonder how you ever lived without it.

Optimizing Your Marketing

There are some impressive tools on the market that will help you get more leads, sales, and engagement out of the traffic you already have. Most of these tools are reasonably priced and offer a free trial, so you can give them a whirl before putting any skin in the game. (For more on optimizing your marketing campaigns, turn to Chapter 13.)

The best optimizing applications are

>> **Supported:** Conversion optimization tools can be a bit intimidating. Look for a tool with a great reputation for support and plenty of training documentation that will help you get up and running.

>> **Multipurpose:** You want a tool that handles a number of different optimization activities, from recording visitor behavior to surveying to split testing.

The optimization applications that we recommend follow.

Visual Website Optimizer

`https://vwo.com/`

An easy-to-use split testing tool. It allows you to run A/B and multivariate testing to optimize your website for increased conversion rates and sales. This paid tool has several pricing packages to choose from for individuals to large agencies.

Optimizely

`https://www.optimizely.com/`

One of the world's leading experimentation platforms for websites, mobile apps, and connected devices. Optimizely makes customer-experience optimization software for companies, which gives businesses the capability to conduct A/B and multivariate testing.

TruConversion

`https://www.truconversion.com/`

TruConversion is a multipurpose optimization tool that offers heat maps, session recordings, user surveys, and more in a single tool.